

**This Month's Feature.....**  
**It's all about Entertaining**

Spring is here and our NC crop is coming into market. The warmer weather makes me want to get together with friends and family. So these recipes are dedicated to entertaining North Carolina style. We have a little of everything using fresh fruit and vegetables and even some North Carolina beef. This is a great state we live in to be able to grow and produce so many delicious things. Next time you are planning a party or just a family function, remember to buy fresh and buy local because It's got to be NC!

**Bruschetta**

6 large Roma tomatoes – diced  
½ medium purple onion – chopped  
½ cup Parmesan cheese – shredded  
½ cup fresh basil – chopped  
1 clove garlic – finely minced  
¼ cup olive oil  
1 French baguette – sliced ¼ inch thick  
Salt and pepper to taste

Mix the first 6 ingredients together and season with salt and pepper. Toast your bread slices that have been drizzled with olive oil. Top each bread slice with a heaping spoon full of tomato mixture. You may garnish with additional Parmesan cheese.

PERSONAL Note: This is one of my favorite spring and summer treats. It is so fresh tasting and easy to make. It is great for a party but also as a quick and delicious appetizer for friends and family. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do!

**NC Beef Skewers**

Beef tips (1 pound will feed 8-10 for appetizers) cut in half  
Grape tomatoes  
Fresh mozzarella balls  
Black olives  
Pepperoni

I cut my beef tips in half so they are bite-size. Season your meat with Worcestershire and salt and pepper. Brown your beef in a pan with a little olive oil until medium well. Place a piece of beef between your other ingredients on each toothpick having only 3 items per appetizer. You can mix and match.

PERSONAL Note: This appetizer can be done so many ways. You can grill your beef if you prefer and you can use any cut of beef. You can also season the meat to your preference. You just don't want anything too overpowering for your other ingredients. I would drizzle your tomato and mozzarella with olive oil and salt and pepper. This is also great to do with leftover steak, if you have any.

### **Momma's Cheese Ball**

2 8oz. packages Cream Cheese  
1 small can crushed pineapple, drained well  
1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper  
1 Tablespoon seasoned salt (Lawry's)  
2 Tablespoons finely grated onion  
2 cups chopped pecans (fine)

Combine all, except 1-cup pecans (best if done with hands) and form into 2 balls or 1 big one. Wrap in wax paper and chill in refrigerator for 3 to 4 hours. When cool shape into better ball(s) and roll in rest of nuts. Chill. Freezes well too.

PERSONAL Note: This is a long time family favorite. I can't tell you how many times I have been asked for this recipe. To be a little more creative, you can serve it in a fresh pineapple that has been scooped out or fresh peppers that have been cored. To do this, don't drain the pineapple and put all the nuts in before mixing.

### **Summertime Cucumber Salad**

6 cucumbers - sliced  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
1 teaspoon white vinegar  
1/2 cup mayonnaise  
1/4 cup sour cream  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives  
Freshly ground black pepper

Partially peel and slice the cucumbers and put them in a glass bowl. Sprinkle them with salt and vinegar. Cover and let stand for 30 minutes. Pour off the excess liquid and drain in colander for about 30 minutes to allow complete drainage. This will get out the excess water. Add the mayonnaise, sour cream, dill, chives and pepper, and mix well. Cover and refrigerate until serving time.

PERSONAL Note: Don't peel your cucumber completely. Give them the striped effect. It will hold up better and the dark green looks beautiful in this salad. You can even save what you do peel and use it for garnish. This dish needs to be made the day you plan to serve it.

### **NC Veggie tray with Wasabi Dip**

1-cup mayonnaise  
4 teaspoons reduced sodium soy sauce  
1 ½ teaspoons sugar  
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice  
4-6 teaspoons wasabi paste

Whisk together mayonnaise, soy sauce, sugar, lemon juice, and wasabi paste until sugar is dissolved. Choose your favorite NC vegetables to serve it with.

PERSONAL Note: If you choose asparagus, blanch it first. After you trim and wash your asparagus, put in a large pot of boiling salted water for 1 minute. Transfer to a colander and rinse under cold running water to stop the cooking. Drain well and pat dry.

### **Mini Blueberry Cheesecakes**

1 cup Graham Cracker Crumbs  
1 cup plus 3 Tbsp. sugar, divided  
3 Tbsp. butter or margarine, melted  
4 pkg. (8 oz. each) Cream Cheese, softened  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 cup Sour Cream  
4 eggs  
1 lemon – peel grated  
2 cups fresh North Carolina blueberries

**PREHEAT** oven to 325°F. Mix crumbs, 3 Tbsp. of the sugar and the butter. Press firmly into bottom of 24 mini-muffin cups with liners. Bake 5-7 min.

**BEAT** cream cheese, remaining 1-cup sugar and the vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Add sour cream and lemon zest; mix well. Add eggs, one at a time, beating on low speed after each addition just until blended. Puree the blueberries in a blender or food processor. Add to your cream cheese mixture and blend gently. Pour mixture into each crust.

**BAKE** 35 min. or until center is almost set; cool. Cover and refrigerate at least 4 hours before serving. Store leftover cheesecake in refrigerator.

PERSONAL Note: Garnish each cheesecake with a fresh blueberry and a curl of lemon. You could also dust them with confectionary sugar. The lemon and blueberry together are a delicious complement to one another.